



## Developing your skills



# Effective E-mail

When you're trying to locate some information in an e-mail someone sent you a few weeks back, what helps you find it quickly? If the sender included the information you want in a long message covering lots of points, the chances are that it will take you time to find it. These notes include a few simple rules to ensure that your emails are read in the first place and stay useful to the recipient.

## EFFECTIVE E-MAIL

### Subject Lines are Headlines

The headline in a newspaper does two things: It grabs your attention and informs you what the article is about so you can decide whether you want to read further.

Email subject lines need to do the same thing. Use the subject line to inform the receiver of EXACTLY what the email is about in a few well-chosen words. You might include a call to action such as "Please respond by 7 November", and if your message is one of a regular series of mails, such as a weekly project report, include the date in the subject line too.

Because everyone gets emails they do not want, appropriate use of the subject line increases the chances your email will be read and not deleted without so much as a glance. Of course, just as it would be ridiculous to publish a newspaper without headlines, never leave the subject line blank.

### Make One Point per Email

The beauty of email, compared with letters, is that it doesn't cost any more to send several mails than it does to send one. So, if you need to communicate with someone

about several matters, write a separate email on each subject.

That way your correspondent can reply to each one in the appropriate time-frame. One topic might only require a short reply that he or she can make straight away. Another topic might require more research. By writing separate emails, you get clearer answers.

The email should be clear and concise, with its purpose detailed in the first paragraph. Sentences should be kept short and to the point. The body of the email should contain all pertinent information and should be direct and informative.

### Specify the Response You Want

Make sure to include any call to action you desire, such as a phone call or follow-up appointment. Then, include your contact information, including your name and phone numbers. The easier you make it for someone else to respond, the more likely they are to do so.

### Be a Good Correspondent

If you regularly use email, make sure to clean out your inbox at least once each day. This is a simple act of courtesy and will also serve to encourage senders to return your emails in a timely manner. If a lengthy response is required to an email, but you don't have the time to pull together the information required now, send a reply saying that you have received the message, and indicating when you will respond fully.

Always set your Out of Office message when you are going to be away for a day or more, whether on leave or because you're at meetings.



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### **Internal Email**

Internal email should be checked regularly and returned in a much quicker manner as it often involves timely projects, immediate updates, meeting notes, and so on.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

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- [Learn Direct](#)
- [Mind Tools](#)
- [Tools for Communication](#)
- [Conversation as communication](#)